

Social Media and the Cosmetic Body Culture Among Nigerian Women

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how social media influences cosmetic body culture among Nigerian women, focusing on the interaction between digital beauty standards and local cultural norms. Drawing on a conceptual review and sociological theories such as Symbolic Interactionism, Foucault's disciplinary power, Bourdieu's cultural capital, and Goffman's dramaturgy, the study explains how platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook promote idealised images of slimness, lighter skin, and enhanced body shapes. These digital portrayals intensify social comparison, body dissatisfaction, and pressures to conform to globalised beauty practices, including skin lightening and cosmetic surgery.

The review also highlights how Nigerian women negotiate these ideals, blending Westernised aesthetics with indigenous perspectives, particularly Yoruba epistemologies that link physical appearance with moral and spiritual identity. Intersectional factors; gender, class, and age; further shape women's experiences of beauty and cosmetic consumption, while the psychological implications include lowered self-esteem, anxiety, and heightened self-surveillance. Ethical concerns related to body commodification, inequality, and unregulated cosmetic markets are identified.

The paper concludes by emphasising the need for media literacy, culturally informed interventions, and regulatory frameworks to promote healthier beauty practices in Nigeria's digital era.

Keywords: Social Media, Cosmetic Body Culture, Nigerian Women, Beauty Ideals, Identity and Body Image

INTRODUCTION

Globally, social media has become a dominant cultural force in how people define their identity, lifestyle and consumption behaviour, especially in relation to body image and beauty standards (Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2018). However, platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have revolutionised how beauty ideals are circulated and internalised and affect the practise of cosmetics around the world (De Vries et al., 2021). This digital influence is demonstrable not only at the West, but increasingly in Africa where social media is mediating the negotiation of modernity, aesthetics and gender identities (Onduru, 2023). In this context, in Nigeria, social media is an important site where the meeting of the social media users across the universe with cosmetic body culture is so vibrant and complex because it is home to a lot of young population and increasing social media penetration (Nielsen, 2025).

Conversely, in Nigeria, the cosmetic culture of the body is so fast changing in the face of both global and local cultural issues as well as dual pressures - global standards of beauty and vivid female characteristics. Cosmetic improvements, skin bleaching, body contouring, and aesthetic surgery have become popular, which shows not only the desires of society as a whole, but also the internalised aspirations fueled by digitalisation (Eze, 2025). Social media platforms have emerged as major ways in which Nigerian women engage with beauty trends, celebrity endorsements, and peer influences and have a profound effect on how they view the 'ideal' body (Okeke & Okoye, 2025). For instance, Facebook, YouTube and TikTok appear to have a significant impact on Nigerian young women's procuring plans for cosmetic products and elective procedures (Chukwuemeka & Ezeani, 2025).

Moreover, the use of social media glamorises evident aesthetic practises, such as skin snowing, with ramifications psychological, identity (Nwosu, 2025).

Despite these trends, there has been little academic focus on the sociological implications on women's cosmetic body culture in Nigeria as portrayed in social media. There is a need to conceptually map the interactions between social media-driven and conventional lines of beauty, traditional gender roles, power relations and cultural capital in Nigeria. The problem is not only approximately individual choices but is much more widely around broader socioeconomic processes like the body regulation and identity performance through the mediation of digital technology (Enyinnaya, 2025). This paper tends to carry out conceptual review in a bid to systematically explore the sociological perceptions that collectively enlighten people on understanding the dynamics of the cosmetic body culture among Nigerian ladies during the social media era.

However, this paper synthesizes some of the prominent sociological theories, notably Foucault's conceptions of disciplinary power, Bourdieu's definition of cultural capital, as well as Goffman's notion of presentation of the self. This review situates cosmetic body culture within the complex social and cultural landscape of Nigeria. It illuminates the role of social media as one of empowerment and constraint, affecting desires, behaviours, and social inequalities of female embodiment. The end result of this paper will lead towards understanding in greater dimensions the intersection of global digital culture in localized social realities in the formation of the bodies and identities of Nigerian women.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sociocultural Context of Cosmetic Body Culture in Nigeria

The sociocultural experience of cosmetic body culture in Nigeria is embedded in the complex historical, ethnoclass process of Nigerian sociocultural ideologies which predates the usage and mobilisation of social media. Moreover, contextualising modern-day occurrences within the sublimations of such a layered edifice of sign and practise is important in creating meaning for the peculiar norms around beauty, body aesthetics and gender roles in Nigeria.

Historically, the classification frame of beauty in Nigeria was guided by indigenous Cultural ideals with a high standard of harmony and balance of physical attributes. In the Igbo ethnic group, for example, beauty has traditionally been defined as harmony between physical attractiveness and moral goodness, with light skin tones highly advised of unions in marriage, and expensive bride prices. This bias is evidenced in the philosophy of the Igbo Afrikaners which does not define beauty as being just physical but also socially valued and harmonious (Omma Arabic meaning physical beauty) (Osaghae, 2019). Furthermore, before colonialism, body adornments including scarification, jewellery, and ethnicity aesthetics were being imposed on Nigerian societies without any shame; free from social stigmas in needless expression, such body adornments denoted beauty, status, and identity human diversity and without hypocrisy (Balogun, 2024).

However, the history of colonialism brought about a lot of changes to these indigenous beauty standards. Eurocentric standards of beauty promoted by colonialism that favours lighter skin, straight hair, and slim body types while discouraging features of Africans (Balogun et al., 2025). More importantly, the idea of colourism - the overtly preferential treatment accorded white-skinned people in the African population and systematically reproduced through the mechanism of social and hierarchies in economic relationships - is now unambiguously hypothecated in the legacy of the Colonial era. With extensive influences of Euro-centrism themes linking lighter complexion to social status, economic opportunities, and intellectual aptitude, colourism flourishes in acting as the force for women in Nigeria to embrace skin bleaching habits that seek to meet expectations for whiteness (Olumide, 2018).

In Nigerian society, gender roles are an important determining factor in the expectations of beauty. The social value of women is generally related to a woman's physical appearance and observance of the cultural ideals of beauty, which are closely monitored and controlled by the family and the community (Balogun, 2024). The patriarchal structure emphasises pressures on role of women to fulfill aesthetic standards to increase marriageability and social acceptability. Hence, cosmetic body culture is thus a place to negotiate one's identities and social capital in a battle between traditional expectations and new influences.

Consequently, the natural intersection of ethnicity and gender proxies itself in different ideals of body image between the different ethnic groups in Nigeria, but the underlying model of beauty is a binary of favouring lighter skin among women, a flaw that is imbued with attributes of desirability and earning higher bride prices among the Igbo in particular (Osaghae, 2019; Olumide, 2018). These norms have long been internalised and have not only led to the feeling of the character and family, but also influenced the craze for modern-day cosmetic practises.

Conversely, social class is another reason why Nigeria's cosmetic body culture is all mixed up. Urban elites and middle classes have higher access to global beauty products and beauty media through which to approximate and reproduce "global" beauty standards based on western ideals (Balogun-Mwangi, 2023). Furthermore, this keeps society perpetuated because the appropriation of beauty, according to class, reinforces the stratification of society through the fact that improved cosmetic appearance and body alteration becomes a standard of cultural capital level and social distinction, following Bourdieu's theory (Balogun-Mwangi, 2023).

Conversely, less elegant women also interact differently with the cosmetic body culture; sometimes face a restriction within the formal frames of the beauty markets and thus case beauty within the meanings of the local reality. The skin bleaching epidemic in Nigeria, valued could be billions of dollars, highlights the exploitation of the beauty insecurity in the capitalist structure especially among women who are in need of moving up their social class by justifying Eurocentric beauty aesthetic (Balogun et al., 2025; Olumide, 2018).

Role of Social Media in Shaping Body Aesthetics

Social media has emerged as a key channel in spreading and normalising the modern standard of cosmetic projection which has a serious influence on body aesthetics perception among Nigerian women. Social media, specifically Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, contribute to promoting a visual culture that serves as a bubble for quick spread of unrealistic beauty standards marked by slim physique, light complexions, and certain facial profiles more similar to the West (InsightSpice, 2024; Sanzari et al., 2023). This often times leads to disagreements with the classic Nigerian beauty standard, leading to discord and pressures to conform to such increasingly internationalised standards (InsightSpice, 2024).

However, understanding the view of social media as being visual contributes to heightening the importance of physical appearance. Image-based sharing sites have adopted a superior importance of visual-related content, having utmost fitness, weight loss, and beauty topics thriving on feeds (Sanzari et al., 2023). The depiction of slender and fairer-skinned models in fashion media has led to the internalisation of narrow standards of beauty, the popularity of skin lightening products and bleaching, popularising them in Nigeria, as this is a reflection of the commoditisation of 'whiteness' as a commodity (Olatunji & Ayandele, 2025; InsightSpice, 2024). Influencer marketing contributes to this trend by reinforcing these ideals through influencing and showcasing influencers and celebs promoting products that offer transformation or enhancement tied to them (Olatunji et al., 2025).

Basically, influencers have a major impact on how beauty standards are defined by being inspirational role models who create trends that are quickly picked up by their followers. Using images that are curated and expressed through lifestyle reveals the peer validation cycle through which desirability of aesthetic values is bolstered which achieves further normalising of these beauty standards (InsightSpice, 2024). For instance, people especially young Nigeria women use social media to make social comparisons with others, leading to decreased body satisfaction and increased body dissatisfaction (Sanzari et al., 2023; Modrzejewska, 2022). The urge to perfect these appearances is further amplified by the influence of social media trends, which quickly circulate and change from one side of the internet to the other (InsightSpice: 2024).

Invariably, social currency, which operates via social platforms where popularity appeals to users through likes, comments, and shares, was another way in which beauty standardisation was normalised; achieving likeability encourages the user to reproduce the beauty ideals to achieve social acceptance and popularity. Likes, comments, and shares in social platforms also encourage users to reproduce ideals of beauty in exchange for social mileage as a social currency (InsightSpice 2024). This blinding validation system is renowned for the patriarchal enforcement and superficial enhancement of looks while undermining the authentic expression of body positivity.

However, the swiftness of online communication means facts about beauty travel an average consumer instantly, via the ability to share through social media platforms; they are able to jump from an exotic locale with (or even without) photographs to ticket into the standard aesthetics of mainstream living within just a few seconds. The "Clean Girl Aesthetic," with its emphasis on simplicity and neatness, reflects the impact that viral beauty narratives can have on Lagos's women's preferences and practises (Rex Clarke adventures 2025). These trends gain a compound virality due to the algorithmic processes of recommendation systems pushing popular posts more and boosting trend usage across sharing boundaries and local cultural limits (Sanzari et al., 2023).

Furthermore, social media is able to insert consumerism related to cosmetic products and procedures within the trends by encouraging the popularisation of the desired body image, which contributes to the cultural aspects of the cosmetic body in Nigeria (GML, 2025). This commercialisation is mixed up with identity politics and social mobility, as meeting the standards of beauty is often associated with having a more prestigious social standing.

More importantly, social media platforms are playing a pivotal role in the construction and consumption of body aesthetics among Nigerian women by predatory beauty trends, visual cultures, influence, peer certification, and beauty virality. Rather than exposing people to the full spectrum of beauty, these platforms perpetuated narrow interpretations of beauty influenced by Westernised as well as local beauty standards and reinforced through social mechanisms that include rewards for conformity. These pressures have an impact on the body image and self-esteem and further contribute to a complex cultural context in which cosmetic body culture thrives.

Theoretical Framework

This theoretical conceit secures the study in key sociological perspectives that shed light on social media, body culture, and identity intersections of Nigerian women. The selection of theories - Symbolic Interactionism, Foucault's power and body discipline, Bourdieu's habitus and cultural capital, Goffman's dramaturgy - provide a rich lensing of the processes of meaning making, power regulation, social class influences, and the performance of identity in the context of cosmetic culture mediated through the social media.

Symbolic Interactionism places a strong emphasis on the active way that individuals both create and interpret meanings in the context of social interactions (including social interactions mediated through media symbols). In the context of the social media and the body cosmetic culture, Nigerian women partake in continuous social interaction where the body becomes the location of exchange of symbolic communication. Through social media such as Instagram and TikTok cosmetic alterations and beauty ideals are portrayed and wrangled as something everyone acknowledges as a shared denotation about what they self-assemble and what constitutes the group identity (e.g., Melewar & Chhabra, 2024). The digital environment caters for continuous interaction where meanings around the concept notion of beauty are co-constructed, contested and reinforced (Charmaz, 2023). This theory draws its focus on the fluid and dynamic nature of identity as performed and recognised in social media spaces.

On one hand, Foucault's interpretation of power and body discipline begins to provide an analysis of how social media operates as a self-surveillance, a regulation mechanism. Embracing the ideas of panopticism by Foucault, and the disciplinary power, the social media agencies could be viewed as the digital arenas where Nigerian women internalise the rules of beauty concerning the chasing of cosmetic bodily concepts and mirroring themselves in those lines (Ahmed & Alade, 2025). The 'gaze' is internalised, encouraging conformity based on beauty standard expectations via constant visibility, feedback, and comparison on the internet. This self-discipline is worsened by the algorithmic gaze alongside peer validation, and this leads to the normalisation of the ways of transforming the body and the consumption of some form of cosmetics as a social discipline (Nkosi & Adeyemi, 2024).

On the other hand, Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and cultural capital enhance the understanding of the effects of social class manifested in cosmetic body culture among Nigerian women. Habitus is used to describe "the embodied dispositions that are individualised by their incorporation into social conditions and the habitus that arise from those social conditions and the social conditions under which the person grew up and sometimes their tastes, preferences, and practises relating to beauty and cosmetic culture" (Kouchaki et al., 2020). Cultural capital in terms of knowledge, skills, and aesthetic disposition also structures access to and engagement with cosmetic products and social media beauty trends. In the Nigerian society, social class affiliation is manifested in

differentiated participation in cosmetic culture, where the choice to utilise cosmetic consumption or access the cosmetic culture may be a choice of women who have higher socio-economic background in such society but others may choose such cosmetic culture as aspirational (Ehlert, 2021).

Invariably, Goffman's dramaturgical approach of social media envisages a stage of identity performance and impression management, which happens constantly. Nigerian women curate their online personas, presenting idealised identities to their content consumers using the cosmetic body culture as props and costumes. Through the strategically crafted self-presentation based on selective disclosure and the visual framing of beauty, individuals control impressions and gain social capital or acceptance or status. The performative nature of social media fits in with Goffman's understanding that identity is a continuous project that is negotiated in front of (spectator's) audience with cosmetic body being an important part of the performed femininity of social belonging.

Convincingly, these sociological theories taken jointly understand the significance of social media in shaping the cosmetic body culture of Nigerian women as a process of meaning making, power regulation, class-based practise and identity performance. Symbolic Interactionism theorises the process of social cultural construction of meanings around beauty; Foucault sees systems of self-discipline and normative scourging; Bourdieu describes cosmetic practise as social hierarchies; and Goffman selfishly unveils the performance and strategy of identity in the digital public sphere. This integrative theoretical framework has provided an excellent base to analyse the mediating relationship of social media to the cosmetic body culture among Nigerian women.

Internalization and Negotiation of Beauty Ideals by Nigerian Women

Unraveling the involvement of Nigerian women within the culturally mediated beauty norms of social media, internalization, conformity, and resistance are shown to have a dynamic entanglement with the workings of identity construction and processes of cultural negotiation. Basically, social media platforms, specifically Instagram have become crucial venues where Nigerian women negotiate and manipulate presiding beauty norms, which are a product of both the Western globalized norms and indigenous cultural aesthetic (Enyinnaya, 2025).

Moreover, exposure of Nigerian women to beauty ideals through the digital medial forms substantial internalization of these ideals such that universal standards for beauty (be it light complexion, slim figure and fair distance in the face) have been widely imbibed as models to be emulated (Glaser, 2024). Hence, it echoes what has previously been seen in other places, in terms of social media pushing hegemonic beauty onto people through persuasive depictions and interactions, indoctrinating women into remaining within a set of norms to stay in social capital and to function as influencers and sources of information. This internalisation, for economically deprived Nigerian women interacts with social and economic structures, manifesting as a beauty tax, where the quest for "aesthetic perfection" suggests a financial burden that increases instability without displacing it, while still being an important entity of self-power and social mobility (Rpublic, 2025). Moreso, this dovetails with feminist insights on disciplinarity and self-surveillance, where women monitor their own appearance in order to conform to external looking as well as the setting up of self-worth and in doing so reinforcing patriarchy-established beauty regimes (Bartky, cited in Rpublic, 2025).

However, the history of engagement of women from Nigeria with the standards of beauty is not entirely a storey of passive adoption. A number of studies point to active negotiation and resistance processes through which the women strive to re-appropriate and reposition beauty ideals within their socio-spiritual lives in culturally specific contexts. Accordingly, Enyinnaya (2025) reports that Igbo women fashion designers use Instagram not only to present themselves, but also to provide cultural reclamation spaces and support the priori indigenous aesthetic expressions such as Nsibidi ideograms to resist imperatives of western beauty regimes. The Iranian cyberspace activity of Nigerian reception is, in fact, an illustration of the hybrid nature of identity construction, which Nigerian women portray in a pluralist sense of being that harmonises the global forces with the local traditions.

Furthermore, identity crafting in the context of social media participation is an intricate negation of femininity, entrepreneurship and agency. Enyinnaya (2025) postulate that the ICY signalling game has trained women of Nigeria to appropriately develop their online persona- profiles so that they can assert their cultural pride, contradict stereotypes and build communal relationships based on beauty and fashion. This period is not

restricted to aesthetics, but it covers the pulverized of economic capital, making cosmetic body culture an agent of communal entrepreneurship and empowerment in a gendered digital economy (Enyinnaya, 2025).

Social media platforms on the other hands make these processes possible by helping to form specific performances through affordances that prioritise performative self-presentation, audience construction, and norm propagation. However, high-resolution images, communicating rudiments, and algorithmic algorithms, while reinforcing unconventionalities to broadly acknowledged definitions of beauty, provide the apparatus for disobedience and alternative narratives (Glaser 2024). An example of this contradiction is Nigerian women's use of Instagram: as some conform to globalised beauty regimes to better sell to the market, others engender feminisms of resistance, create counter discourses, and negotiate hybrid identities that refuse a beautified human template (Enyinnaya, 2025).

More importantly, research on appearance ideals in general found evidence of negotiation mechanisms where women selectively adopt or resist societal ideals according to intertwined identities and social-cultural systems (Xiao & Wang, 2021). Mainly, these theoretical ontologies highlight how internalization of beauty norms arbitrates tensions between ambivalence and objectification, and therefore differentially influences women's ability to resist, as well as their sense of self.

Intersectionality: Gender, Class, and Age in Cosmetic Body Culture

Intersectionality is a critical analytical framework that offers a way of understanding the ways that different social identities intersect to produce lived experiences and push people to the margins. Application of intersectionality within the context of cosmetic body culture are used to explain how the relationship between gender, class, and age structuration plays a role in shaping body image and preference in the practise of cosmetic culture among women, in both the Nigerian and international space.

Intersectionality on one hand does not see body image within the context of contemporary culture as existing in isolation but rather as the combined effects of multiple social identities. Gryphon (2022) emphasises how bodies of race, gender, class, age, etc. come together to create body positivity discourses and the beauty politics beneath it to point to how minoritized identities face their own battles in navigating beauty standards. It is a complex stress that is also present across civilizations where, because of colonial histories and media dynamics from around the world, there are entrenched notions of beauty that individuals today feel compelled to live up to.

The ways social media contributes to these pressures include by spreading hegemonic facets of beauty that revolve around youth, slimness, and skin shade - all of which are perceived to be implicitly created by Eurocentric ideals (Johnston, 2025). Therefore, for women in Nigeria who interact with global and local social media spaces, it comes with a system of beauty that appreciates certain aesthetics while excluding others. This interface intensifies for women with intersecting marginalised individualities - women with minority identities may experience increased body displeasure and heaviness to fit in through cosmetic enhancement (Rodgers et al., 2023).

Conversely, claiming a larger share of the media's focus and discursive emphasis of body obsession, women are overwhelmingly addressed when thinking about the body; women are disproportionately addressed to spend their resources on bodily capital through available products and procedures. Mears (Johnston, 2025) claims the gendered imperatives measured on the fact that women are pushed to become beautiful because it promises social and economic capital, whereas men are subject to less pressure in the same direction. The public disclosure of plastic surgeries by celebrities and influencers (e.g., Toke Makinwa, Ini Edo, and Bobrisky), are gendered and performative aspects of body-affecting in these local public fora and shape aspirational models of beauty (Nwadiakor, 2025).

Furthermore, the body shaming and gendered look-copies that women receive online makes conformity to restrictive norms more difficult to escape social claims from being different. Social media sites are therefore both sites of empowerment and constraint where ideals about the body are both promoted and challenged (Dosekun 2022).

Casting one's socioeconomic status grades in, access to cosmetic practises focused on the body is given and this position relates to beauty ideals and how they are experienced and interrogated in relation to the kind of body

one wishes to develop. Theorists like Johnstone (2025) who research intersectionality topics have pointed to the importance of class being a societal component of beauty regimes and how they affect who is able to access beauty regimes and restraint from them. In Nigeria, there are some socioeconomic variances that influence the economic affordability and social acceptability of cosmetic interventions which create class-based differences in participating in body culture (Nwadiolor, 2025).

Moreover, this dynamic is in agreement with the general determinants that working-class women are prone to assess higher pressures and insecurities compared to their affluent counterparts with respect to ageing and appearance, due to a range of factors including but not limited to having more means to prevent the effects of appearance pressures (Aberg 2020). Hence, class, gender, and age all influence that complicated space of cosmetic body culture.

Age is another intersecting identity that influences body image and cosmetic culture of the body. Studies illustrate that younger women are more susceptible to social media's unrealistic and sexualising images in general (Rodgers et al, 2022), whilst older women, particularly those from a lower socio-economic group, can be community-shunned with the compounding issues of age-related stigma and loss of confidence (Berg, 2020; Holman, 2020). It has swayed cosmetic use because women engage in beauty work to resist the effects of age on their beauty capital.

In the Nigerian setting, observable culturally-based younger-established norms and venera interplay with globalised beauty ideals to create specific pressures for Nigerian women to use cosmetic enhancement to allow them to look younger (Nwadiolor 2025). In this manner, age interacts with gender and with class in order to produce a specific and particular cosmetic body culture.

However social media is playing a significant role in this intersectional dynamic. Influenced by the aesthetic culture on social media, where celebrity status, influencers, and media have the power to shape and promote unrealistic views of beauty and therefore consuming the media results in a constant sense of dissatisfaction with the body and a higher consumption of cosmetics (Johnston, 2025; Rodgers, 2022). In Nigeria, social media is a site that transmits new aesthetic standards that bring in the clash between the traditional aesthetics, and the neo-normative ideas of followers of contemporary life that belong to a black world that is often Eurocenters and create venue for indigenous identity negotiations (Dosekun 2022; Nwadiolor 2025).

Conflicts around body shaming and cosmetic surgery experienced by a number of social media personalities in Nigeria are indicative of the long-standing contestations of contentious body idea to further reforms that define what the body should look and be, and the trend shown by social media is epitomised in this context (Nwadiolor, 2025).

The intersectional approach expands knowledge beyond a singular identity category to shed light on the complex interaction of the gender, class, and age in distributing human body image and cosmetic body culture amongst the Nigerian women. Research has also shown that social media is influential platform where intersectional pressure play out and impact beauty standards, rituals, and experiences. The emerging research literature makes the need for an intersectional examination of cosmetic body culture in order to understand how Nigerian women negotiate and mediate competing aesthetics in an era of digital globalisation.

Social Media's Impact on Mental Health and Well-Being

The pervasive growth of social media in Nigeria due to high penetration by smartphones and having access to the Internet has had a significant impact on the daily lives of youths, most particularly women, in terms of their body perception, self-esteem, and mental well-being (Maduka, 2025). Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and Twitter have become major battlegrounds for the proliferation of cosmetic body culture - where idealised notions of beauty are promoted but often incomprehensible to achieve. Thus, in this paper, the psychological consequences of body dissatisfaction, self-esteem, social comparison and possible mental health risks, in an online social environment on Nigerian women are critically discussed within the context of Nigerian society.

Consequently, body dissatisfaction is one of the major psychosocial side effects that social media has brought in heightening poor self-comparisons and objectification in the minds of Nigerian women. Maduka (2025) points out that constant exposure to edited coded images that indicate an ideal body structure breeds a culture of social

comparison, resulting in increased body dissatisfaction among Nigerian young women. This is enhanced by the aesthetic body culture in media spaces such as Instagram, TikTok, etc. where algorithmic content is saturated with both optimise and beautification charms on the internet as an imitation of beauty, which only feeds wrong and unrealistic images of beauty standards (Maduka, 2025). Additionally, the socially network allows for an ongoing process where all are tailored to monitor themselves, leading to anxiety and need for social validation by way of likes and comments, thus resulting in poor body-image and dissatisfaction (Plackett et al., 2023).

Basically, the connection between social media usage and self-esteem among women in Nigeria is still entrenched where social comparison is a significant process. A further instance of online social comparison is upward comparison in which users compare themselves to idealised, edited, or filtered images of other people's appearances, severely diminishing their self-worth and confidence (Maduka, 2025). Plackett et al. (2023) propose that such social comparisons are associated with depressive symptoms and low self-esteem, particularly when people are mere spectators when consuming social media content. On the other hand, Maduka (2025) opined that the manifestation of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) similarly adds a layer of intricacy to this relationship, as it perpetuates anxiety and emotional torment linked to social media engagement. These harms, however, are balancing some treatment-intervention based, social media-based interventions that report potential efficacy to offset their impacts by encouraging mindfulness and alleviating unhealthy comparison behaviours (Plackett et al., 2023).

The unhealthy and ill-advised perception by women, particularly Nigerian women, towards social media use has been linked with various potential adverse consequences beyond body image, which include anxiety, depression, and overall psychological distress (Maduka, 2025; Fashoto, 2025). The double-edged jeopardy of societal stigma over mental health in Nigeria and the lack of professional help needed to facilitate the recovery makes the mass of the crisis worse, with the individuals affected being alone (Maduka, 2025). Furthermore, women using social media are exposed to high burdens resulting from appearance-related cyberbullying and online harassment both amplified by mental health risks on platforms (Maduka, 2025). Also, social media skits and awareness campaigns on the platform have become culturally relevant ways to educate mental health education and depression therapy amongst Nigerian women, especially the younger age bracket, which underscores the risk and the usefulness of social media for mental wellness (Obiechina, 2023).

The role of social media and the culture of female physicality in American mental health as it relates to Nigerian women are inextricably linked to culture and society at large. Similar to many other nations, mental health remains to be greatly stigmatised in Nigeria, while insufficient arrangement alongside low mental well-being literacy further complicate optimistic positive results for affected individuals (Maduka, 2025; Fashoto, 2025). In addition, the nature of the cosmetic image of the body in social media systems coincides with the socio-economic struggles of Nigerian women such as lack of employment or societal expectations, and justifies the psychological burden (Maduka, 2025). Despite these challenges, social media, if properly utilised, offers possibilities of social support, awareness, and empowerment through supportive interventions and mental health education (Obiechina, 2023; Fashoto, 2025).

Ethical and Societal Implications

Nigerian female perspectives of beauty, identity, and social standing are greatly influenced by the diverse impact of cosmetic body culture, including deeply social media-related content and notions. The magnitudes of the occurrence on a wider scale raise ethical concerns about the commodification of the body, perpetuation of impractical beauty ideals, and the exacerbation of social inequalities.

It's unquestionable that the commodification of female bodies is intensified through social media sites that commodify the idea of beauty, making it a marketplace under the influence of the commercial and social pressures. Commodification in the Nigerian context also collides with cultural ideologies and tradition where it often contradicts indigenous aesthetics like scarification and natural adornment which had rich cultural connection long before (Nwadiolor & Adingwupu, 2025). The infiltration of Westernised beauty standards through social media and cosmetic surgery promotes challenge to the cultural preservation and sparks an ethical debate on the importance of not letting the societal habit further into the culture through the importance of beauty over cultural identity (Nwadiolor & Adingwupu, 2025).

Additionally, the part special people and influencers encompassed in advancing these commodified ideals of beauty carry moral obligations. Their ratifications have frequently prolonged the idea of cosmetic enhancements and light skin preferences, affecting public opinions and possibly sanctioning practises that value external appearance over inner values and cultural authenticity (Nwadiolor & Adingwupu, 2025).

Social media gives unrealistic images of beauty by promoting digitally edit and surgically modified images and creates dissatisfaction and distorted self-bodies among Nigerian women. These deceptive ideals widely spearhead body unhappiness and normative dissatisfaction with organic body shapes and skins (Ejike, 2015; Balogun-Mwangi, 2023). The glorification and profit-making of lighter skin and thinner body ideals on these platforms, on the one hand, perpetuates psycho-emotional harms like self-esteem and body images, as most beauty ideals are not realistic for most people (Nwadiolor & Adingwupu, 2025; Balogun-Mwangi, 2023).

The influence of these unattainable standards creates a culture where one's look replaces real merit as a differentiator of social life in a negative way affecting the upholding of traditional values in Nigeria where self-acceptance and natural beauty was contended for as the value of being a human (Nwadiolor & Adingwupu, 2025; Ejike, 2015).

Even the innumerable ethical warning signs associated with cosmetic body culture cannot be distinguished from issues of social inequality. In addition, the strongly structured socioeconomic disparities in Nigeria define access to cosmetic procedures and products, so that these beauty enhancements remain largely accessible to the upper strata of the socioeconomic ladder, thus further reinforcing class displacement (Nwangwuo & Adingwupu, 2025). Cosmetic marketing wallets marriages reinforces social class structures of the photosphere where the wealthy can easily align with social media skin beauty norms whereas the disenfranchised are left out or forced to align through unduly skin bleaching irrespective of the poisonous effects on their health (Nwadiolor & Adingwupu, 2025).

As a result, beautification and commodification process enhanced by social media cultivates the current existing disparities, where the beauty body culture becomes a space in which economic hegemony becomes a social currency and worth as an economic privilege (Nwadiolor & Adingwupu, 2025).

Yoruba Sociological Epistemology Perspective

From the time immemorial, the Yoruba sociological epistemology involves indigenous knowledge systems, cultural values and philosophical understandings about human existence, social relations and body, which are passed down through mostly oral forms such as proverbs, Ifa corpus, oriki (praise poetry) and communal practises. This epistemological framework is critical to the understanding of body culture and social aesthetics in the Yoruba context which informs the contemporary issues such as cosmetic body culture influenced by social media of Nigerian women.

Indigenous Knowledge on Body and Body Sizes

Recent ethnographic research indicates that Yoruba indigenous knowledge provides a complex picture of body size in which neither large body size is always glorified nor small body size is excluded. For example, one 2023 study that used qualitative approaches discussed Yoruba concepts, Ifa literary corpus and proverbs about body sizes. The findings imply that Yoruba oral traditions celebrate big and small body sizes and address aspects of health and social functions without the inflexible preference over the other, as is the case in Western notions of body ideals. The corpus clearly were communicating that the body is an important social symbol, but the appraisal of body size is context-dependent and fluid (Ibrahim & Jegede, 2017).

The Duality of Body and Spirit in Yoruba Thought

Yoruba epistemology emphasise the indissolubility of the physical body (ara) and the spiritual self (emi, ori) both of which comprise personhood. The physical body is shaped by Orisanla (God of creation) and the ontological understanding of body and spirit is a holistic human conception that is peculiar to the Yoruba cosmology. This perspective affects attitudes towards the appearance and modification of the body with the assertion that physical beauty, external, has to be in agreement with spiritual and moral values. For instance, the dressing and presenting oneself, have serious moral derivation and are based on respecting the ethos (onta) of

Omólufua (ideal man/woman) which dictates the social conducts in Yoruba communities (Kanu, Omojola, & Bazza, 2021).

Epistemology and Social Relations

Yoruba sociological epistemology is situated in social relations and community values. The idea of *Aye* (the physical world and one's engagement with it as an individual) serves to highlight ethical intentionality and relational personhood or ethical intentionality which designates the mode of perception and value of bodies in Yoruba society. Consequently, body culture is not an aesthetic individual decision but corresponded to communal values, spiritual correspondence, and social identity. This indigenous foundation offers an alternative to these modern-day globalised beauty pressures which are often amplified by social media (Fabiya 2023).

Relevance to Social Media and Cosmetic Body Culture

This epistemological basis provides essential insight into how Yoruba women negotiate and sometimes resist dominant cosmetical body norms that are promoted on social media. While the social media projects mostly globalised the idea of beauty ideals, Yoruba epistemology reminds us of cultural frameworks that celebrate different body forms, and link physical form with spiritual and moral dimensions. This interplay affects the extent to which Nigerian women may internalise, adapt or question cosmetic body culture trends - an important consideration for sociological research into the influence of social media on body image (Ibrahim & Jegede, 2017; Kanu et al. 2017).

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| Body Size in Indigenous Oral Knowledge among the Yorùbá | Ibrahim & Jegede | 2017 | Explores Yoruba concepts, Ifa corpus, body sizes, proverbs, balanced appreciations on large and small bodies. | jpanafrican |
| The Human Person in Yoruba Culture and Philosophy | Kanu et al. | 2021 | Discusses dual physical and spiritual conception of personhood; body associated with moral as well as spiritual. | acjol |
| Technological Culture and the Challenge of Erosion of Yoruba Moral Standards | Oyinlade, E.O. | 2024 | Discusses conflict between the Yoruba moral principles of how the body should be presented and modern influences such as technology and media. | abjournals |
| Yoruba Ontology: A Critique of the Conceptualization of Life and Death | Akomolafe, M.A. | 2016 | Yoruba metaphysical body, soul and destiny view in holistic unity contrast to Cartesian dualism | jpanafrican |
| Harnessing the Yoruba Culture and Tradition in Nigeria | Fabiya | 2023 | Discusses Yoruba cosmology, Aye concept and socio-cultural engagement that shapes the values attached to the body and appearance. | apas |

Synthesis

Yoruba sociological epistemology offers a socio-cultural rich framework for understanding body culture of Nigerian women. The indigenous oral knowledge and spiritual worldview are contrasted (and interact with) social media influences that promote often homogenised cosmetic ideals. This viewpoint is important in looking

into the negotiation of body picture, identity and cosmetic exercises in Nigerian society today, primarily in the face of social media's all-absorbing influence. This review presents a basis for research that looks at the influence of Yoruba women's cultural epistemology on their reception, interpretation, and in some cases contestation of cosmetic body culture propagated on digital platforms.

Gaps in Literature and Directions for Future Research

Notwithstanding the proliferation of academic research on issues of body image and cosmetic culture, there is still a gap in empirical studies relating directly to Nigerian women with respect to the intricacies of social media as a medium for development of the cosmetic culture of the body. Therefore, most existing research approaches generalisation from the results of western population or general African context without considering Nigerian delineation rather differences in sociocultural, economic, as well as ethnic diversity (Balogun-Mwangi, 2023). The interplay between old world beauty standards and new standards introduced through Western-implicated Helveticas on Instagram and Tiktok remains understudied, which opens a gap that restricts attempts to understand the particular pressures and accommodations Nigerian women face (InsightSpice, 2024).

While the impact of social media is known to spread unrealistic and often unattainable beauty ideals but no attention is paid to the resultant psychological impact such as anxiety, depression, body dysmorphia and eating disorders on young people especially in Nigeria who are regularly exposed to the comparison scene in digital technology space (InsightSpice, 2024). Furthermore, there is a critical research gap with regards to cyberbullying, unhappiness about one's body and use of social media as a platform for roasting and cyberbullying, as studies in this area have not been carried out in Nigeria online spaces.

Nigerian women, in light of social media influences, are motivated to go for expensive cosmetic interventions, skin bleaching or surgical body enhancements which are too little documented in terms of the financial implications for affected women. The combined feature of economic dimension with linkages to an overarching capitalist and colonial legacy in beauty standards, however, is an incipient but poorly studied domain (PrimeProgressNG, 2025; RPUBLIC, 2025).

According to NU Research Process (2017), existing works on cosmetic culture among Nigerian women do not put much emphasis on longitudinal study design, or mixed methods research that can inform changing trends and causal relationships to better understand the essence of cosmetic culture among women. Inconsistent with the typical urban-national scale, the majority of the studies are quite localised and small-scale and thus lack the level of generalisation to Nigeria's various socio-ethnic and urban-rural conditions.

Future research with strong empirical studies specifically addressing the interaction of social media, cultural identity, and cultural body among cosmetic culture in Nigeria is recommended. This necessitated the disaggregation of data by age conformation, region, socio-economic status, and ethnic groups to inaugurate differential impacts (Balogun-Mwangi, 2023). Over, in-depth qualitative research combined with quantitative surveys could be used to understand how beauty inspiration and methods of inspiration are negotiated by the women in Nigeria, and the part played by social media influencers.

There is a need for careful studies on the mental health implications of social media body image of women in Nigeria. Studies may look into prevalence of body dissatisfaction, disordered eating, depressive symptoms, and resilience factors as social support systems and media literacy education (InsightSpice, 2024). Interactive science studies would be good to determine if media literacy learning programmes and community facilitation models are effective in shaping positive digital experiences.

There is still work to be done on economic effects and social constructs of cosmetic body culture as financial hardship created through consumption of cosmetics can be examined in relation to problems of colonialism, race, and gender within the fast-changing local Nigerian society. One could conduct regulatory Good Practise (GP) Studies into respectful advertising (ethical marketing with regards to surgery and cosmetic products on social media channels (Rpublic, 2025; PrimeProgressNG, 2025) or within the less-regulated field of cosmetic products.

Using digital techniques that are creative and favourite approaches in ethnography and sociology: mixed methods, longitudinal designs and digital narratives. It was suggested that the sample size for Nigeria be

increased and that they should obtain representative samples for each of the states in order to enhance generalizability as well as policy relevance (NU Research Process (2017). Feminist theories, Postcolonial theories, underpinned by technocultural theories, might offer the teacher a better understanding of the power dynamics involved in the Nigerian female's digital cosmetic self-presentation (Enyinnaya, 2025).

Due to findings and reports by researchers, it is recommended that policy and community-based programme interventions for Nigerian women should be developed to strengthen media literacy skills to interrogate edited and unrealistic images in social media and minimise strenuous comparisons and foster optimal body image practises (InsightSpice, 2024).

Robust regulatory essays associated with promotions and dispersion of cosmetic items by way of social media can return exploitation and health risk linked with unregulated skin versa-lightening and aesthetic surgical procedures (RPUBLIC, 2025). Fostering positive social media communities that advocate for inclusive beauty standards and offer emotional support can balance the negative impacts of social media on users, such as cyberbullying and mental health issues (InsightSpice, 2024).

CONCLUSION

The exhaustive impact of social media interplay deeply with Nigeria female cosmetist's body culture vogue, scripting and curating the standards of beauty in profound manners. However, particular sociological theories, focusing on social comparison and agenda-setting, are found necessary to explain how exposure to photographic practises and celebrity ideologies on Internet image-shingles sites, such as Instagram, affect body satisfaction and self-concept. John et al., (2023) showed that thin and curvaceous standards perceived from social media exert conflicting impact on the body image of women in Nigeria. In addition, these findings show that social media offers not only a medium of aesthetic practise; it is a powerful socialising force, both eclipsing and complicating such beauty norms.

The significance of sociological theory is in its ability to put these mediated beauty norms into context in relation to power structures and cultural expectations throughout wider society. Cultural containers also explain how such ideals are internalised and negotiated by subjects under the influence of local and global interpenetrations, showing that there is a digital construction as well as social embeddedness of the aesthetic culture of the body fit. This engagement for Nigerian women shows the tension between following globalised standards of beauty and the need to reaffirm a strong sense of indigeneity with social media playing a crucial role as both a location of contestation and conformity at the same time.

These results have important implications for social change. By being aware of the societal impact of social media's prioritisation of a particular standard of beauty, it becomes possible to advocate for a shift towards more inclusive and diverse beauty standards that speak to the complex Nigerian cultural universe. Moreover, incorporating sociological theories into public health and education initiatives can instill a critical analysis in women of the content they encounter online, rejecting comparisons that are detrimental to themselves. Ultimately, developing media literacy and general cultural sensibility, a more inclusive ornamental space could be co-created and thus lead to a healthier range of self-esteem and social well-being for Nigerian women.

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